REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 1, 16 and 21 are amended for the Examiner's further consideration. Claims 25-31 are added for the Examiner's consideration. Claims 1, 3-4, 6, 8-9, 11, and 13-30 are currently pending. Claims 2, 5, 7, 10, and 12 were canceled during prosecution of the application without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1, 3-4, 6, 8-9, 11, and 13-24 remain rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,058,373 to Blinn et al. (Blinn). Claims 1, 3-4, 6, 8-9, 11, and 13-24 remain rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,023,683 to Johnson, et al. (Johnson). Applicants request reconsideration of the rejections in view of the Board's decision, the above amendments, and the following remarks.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The inventors have found that the use of a computer implemented Order Interceptor of the invention that preprocesses Electronic Sales Orders (ESOs) before being sent to a sales order system provides many advantages over the prior art systems. In general, the preprocessing of information with the Order Interceptor prior to the submission of the actual sales order to an order processing system allows for an asynchronous availability check with any third party Available to Promise (ATP) packages, which may be running on a remote server. This asynchronous check with an ATP planning and forecast engine determines if material is available for a given quantity or delivery date; the result of which is to determine key information about the sales order, e.g., the sales organization or distribution channels involved in providing the material or items, prior to the actual processing of the order. Based on the ATP result, the Order Interceptor is capable of modifying the ESO or even split the ESO into multiple requests. For example, if several line items are supplied by different delivery plants with different criteria, the ESO can be divided into multiple ESOs. This clearly provides efficiencies to the sales order system, compared to prior art systems.

In addition to supporting third party availability checks and splitting ESOs, the pre-processing Order Interceptor provides a robust set of business rules that allows a supplier to configure how a request is managed. The use of these rules prevents subsequent problems in

deliveries and keeps parties in conformance with agreements. This also provides efficiency to the ordering process.

The Order Interceptor also provides for a Workbench component that allows any ESOs held for review to be viewed or edited. This is all performed prior to the processing of the order. By way of embodiment, the Workbench provides a customer purchase order view of the ESO that looks, feels and behaves like actual order entry screens. In addition to displaying the ESO, the Workbench displays messages generated from the order interceptor pre-processor describing why the ESO was held for review. The Workbench branches to an appropriate data correction screen and may present specific segments in the ESO for correction. This process continues until all messages are corrected or marked reviewed. The supplier can then decide to accept the request, reject the request, or accept individual line items. If the request is ultimately rejected, another feature of the Order Interceptor generates a reject acknowledgment without forwarding the ESO to the order processing system. In other words, the order will be stopped prior to the processing thereof, saving time and expense.

In essence, the Order Interceptor receives an order from a customer and proceeds to apply business criteria to the ESO in order to automatically check the ESO and provide corrections or alterations (if necessary) based upon the particular customer that is placing the order. The Order Interceptor can automatically verify the integrity of the ESO or alter the ESO fields based on business criteria previously established for the submitting customer, including generating multiple ESOs as necessary based upon third party ATP information. If the ESO, as submitted, contains errors that are automatically uncorrectable, a workbench feature permits manual intervention to adjust items and fields at different ordering stages prior to transmitting to the order processing module, of any system All of this occurs prior to any one or more ESOs being routed to an order processing system. In essence, these features and functions are collectively called a pre-processor that performs the unique pre-processing as discussed above. The pre-processor and pre-processing are independent of the sales order system and provide distinctly valuable functions. They are not merely a separation of sales order functions, as suggested by the Examiner.

35 U.S. C. §103(a) Rejection over
U.S. Patent No 6,058,373 to Blinn

In rejecting the present claims, the Examiner maintains that (a) the steps/functions of Blinn, et al. can be split into two separate processing systems: a "pre-processor" and a "processor" and (b) the claimed invention performs exactly the same steps/functions of the "pre-processor" of the Blinn, et al. On this basis, the Examiner asserted that it would have been obvious to split the system of Blinn, et al. in order to improve overall system performance/ throughput because the claimed invention is merely "constructing a formerly integral structure in various elements" which requires only routine skill in the art. Also, in rejecting the claimed invention, the Examiner, in reference to Blinn, points to flow charts of Figures 13 and 15 and argues that all the elements and steps of the present invention are disclosed and that splitting the processing steps/functions into a "pre-processor" and "processor" would have been obvious to one skilled in the art.

Applicants understand the Examiner's position, but submit that the features of the claimed invention are not shown in the Blinn reference. In Blinn, all of the processing is performed in the order module. If the order is not accurate, the system will simply "kick" it out and request a new order. There is no capabilities similar or the same as that of the claimed invention.

For example, Blinn is directed to processing on-line electronic sales orders utilizing an order with multiple key-value pairs which are not organized with a predetermined format, and which allows a merchant to add new key-value pairs without modifying the software instructions to the existing order processing component. Figure 13 and 15 show flow charts outlining the processing steps of Blinn, none of which even equate to the pre-processing of the present invention. Specifically,

> FIG 13. Illustrates a flow chart of the sequence of states which occur when a consumer accesses the electronic merchandising system 100. Beginning in a start state 1300, the present invention proceeds to state 1302 where the consumer directs his consumer browser 110 to access the electronic merchandising system 100. Proceeding to state 1304, the consumer views the virtual store displayed by the dynamic page generator 120.

> In state 1304, the virtual store offers the consumer a number of options. For instance, the consumer can navigate about the virtual store, view different sales departments, obtain information about products offered for sale, select desired items, view a shopping cart of selected items and can purchase selected items. The various options are represented with buttons, menus, or other user interface inputs which contain hyperlinks.

In the remaining steps, the user can view items, display product information, purchase the order, etc. Figure 15 further outlines the uses of key-pairs and merchant/shopper information stages, etc. There is no disclosure, whatsoever, of a pre-processing of orders, as defined in the present invention, prior to the processing thereof.

The invention provides much more than disclosed or reasonably suggested in the Blinn reference. The present invention is directed for use between business or trading partners (page 2, 12-17) whereby known relationships are established for rules of trading (page 6, ll. 14-23). These business relations routinely expect repetitive automatic processing to occur based on these business rules. In Just in Time relations, schedules, timing, and availability are critical and largely automated. So, when substantial orders are placed, the goal is to achieve successful order fulfillment automatically, with minimal human intervention prior to sending to the order processing. It is important that any order is as accurate as possible, all of which occurs prior to the any ESO being routed by a router to an order processing system such as SAP 212 or OEMLS 211 (Figure 2.)

Applicants submit that Blinn, et al. does not include the features of the invention.

35 U.S. C. §103(a) Rejection over
U.S. Patent No. 6,023,683 to Johnson

In rejecting the claimed invention over the Johnson reference, the Examiner asserted that:

> Johnson, et al. clearly anticipates all of the substantive elements of the instant invention, except that the system of Johnson is an integral, unitary system, performing all necessary processing steps/functions, whereas the system contemplated by the instant invention, while performing exactly the same steps/functions overall, merely splits the various processing.

Appellants disagree with the Examiner's general assertion that Johnson anticipates all of the substantive elements of the instant invention.

Again many of the features of the invention are not disclosed by Johnson. Johnson relies extensively on human manual interaction to search catalog databases and to *subsequently build an order*. Johnson does not teach intercepting or receiving a "completed" order submission and checking for portions of the sales order that can be satisfied as recited by claim 1 of the invention or, for example, automatically checking and processing the order against pre-existing business rules as recited in claims 3, 8, 17, and 22. Nor does Johnson teach automatically correcting the order against business rules as recited in claim 6. Johnson also does not disclose a means for automatically detecting errors, and providing a means for editing, or updating an order submission, as does the present invention in claims 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 17, 18, and 22, in view of the amendment to claim 1.

Johnson, on the other hand, is directed to providing an "ability to search multiple catalogs from different suppliers" (page 4, lines 46-47). More specifically, Johnson is directed to an electronic sourcing method and system that provides *a user* with the capability of searching a database containing data (including product/vendor identification, and other product information) relating to items available from at least two vendor product catalogs. It also has the capability of transferring the product information for desired catalog items obtained as a result of the search to a requisition/purchasing system for use in generating a requisition including entries for the desired catalog items.

Johnson is also capable of creating an order list including desired catalog items available from vendor product catalogs as a result of such a database search. To provide these functions, Johnson shows a computer that maintains a catalog database including product information relating to catalog items available from vendor product catalogs, and a means for generating a requisition including at least one requisitioned item. Information at least partially identifying an item desired to be requisitioned is entered *manually by a user*, and utilized for searching the database for catalog items matching that information and for selecting at least one item as a result of the search. Data identifying the selected catalog items are communicated to the requisition

building module, which generates a requisition including entries for items corresponding to the selected catalog items. Additionally, Johnson may check the availability of one or more inventory locations of the corresponding catalog items (See, cols. 2 and 3).

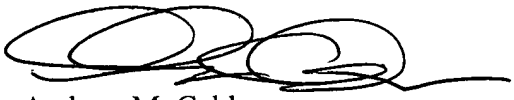
New Claims

Applicants further add new claims 25-31 for consideration by the Examiner. Claims 25-31 further define the claimed invention over the applied prior art. For example, neither the Blinn nor Johnson references show the order interceptor determining if any processing problems are present and, if so, creating a workflow item that can be reviewed and modified prior to transmitting to the order processing system. Also, these references do not show validating an accuracy of the electronic sales order at the different stages or building-up the electronic sales order. These references also do not show an order interceptor which splits the order or ensures all attributes are present and accurate in the electronic sales order prior to transmitting to the order processing system.

CONCLUSION

In summary, neither the Blinn nor the Johnson references teach or suggest the features of the claimed invention. Applicants thus submit that all of the claims are patentably distinct from the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below, if needed. Applicant hereby makes a written conditional petition for extension of time, if required.

Respectfully submitted,



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